



**TOWN OF BEDFORD**  
97 MCMAHON ROAD  
BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

## **Bedford Public Schools Update on COVID-19**

**May 14, 2020**

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met May 14, 2020 to review the latest guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH), the office of Governor Charlie Baker, and Town Legal Counsel.

The COVID-19 Task Force is comprised of the following Town officials:

*Sarah Stanton, Town Manager*  
*Jon Sills, Superintendent of Schools*  
*Heidi Porter, Director of Health and Human Services*  
*Robert Bongiorno, Police Chief*  
*David Grunes, Fire Chief*  
*Taissir Alani, Facilities Director*

### Current Case Report

As of today, May 14, 2020, there have been a total of one hundred and seventy-two (172) positive cases of COVID-19 reported to the Town of Bedford Board of Health by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH) and thirty-one (31) deaths of Bedford residents attributed to COVID-19. The total case number includes residents of the Town of Bedford, including but not limited to those in: single-family homes, apartments, the VA campus, Hanscom Air Force Base, special needs group homes and any and all other larger assisted living/care facilities in Bedford as reported to us by the MA DPH.

As you may be aware, long-term care facilities serving the elderly and congregate care facilities, house susceptible populations with underlying conditions who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Increased testing occurs at these facilities and results in more positive cases being identified. As such, cities and towns with these facilities, like Bedford, experience elevated positive case counts and, unfortunately, deaths due to the vulnerability to COVID-19 of the populations within those facilities.

Forty (40) of the total Bedford cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there may other Bedford residents who would be considered persons under investigation (PUIs) in that they are symptomatic, have undergone testing but have not yet received results. There are other individuals impacted by COVID-19 in

the community that have not sought medical attention, and/or have not been tested and are isolating at home regardless. Those individuals do not appear on the surveillance reports the Town receives from the MA DPH. The Board of Health continues to do the appropriate follow-up and outreach to those residents and close contacts known to us and the VA is conducting follow-up and contact tracing of the Veteran's under their care. Many of the identified close contacts of some of the Bedford cases never exhibited symptoms, have completed their required quarantine period and have been released from quarantine by the Board of Health.

Please note, in part to alleviate the community concern, the VA does do a daily report of their numbers, which includes inpatients, outpatients and staff, many of whom do not call Bedford home. The information can be found here: <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/Healthcare/COVID19NationalSummary>

### **May 13, 2020, COVID-19 Daily Update- Select Board Meeting Correction**

Yesterday, the use of the word "voted" to describe the action of the Select Board to move forward with holding Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, June 27, 2020 was referenced in the daily update. The Select Board did not take a vote during their meeting on May 13, 2020 regarding holding Annual Town Meeting, but rather expressed consensus on the proposed date of Saturday, June 27, 2020. Further details will be released in upcoming updates of the when, where, and how of Annual Town Meeting.

### **Important Updates**

#### **Mask and Face Covering Order**

All residents over the age of two are required to use a face covering or mask in public places where maintaining proper social distancing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are not possible. This order applies to all workers and customers of businesses and other organizations that are currently open to the public and permitted to operate as COVID-19 Essential Businesses, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and other retail stores. Residents are also required to wear a mask or face covering at all times when using any means of transportation service or public mass transit.

This order also applies outdoors if you cannot keep a safe distance from others. In practice, this means that, even if you are seeking some fresh air or exercise by going outside for a walk, run or bike ride in a place where you don't expect to see anyone else, you still need to wear a face covering. You can keep it around your neck if no one is around. But when you see someone else you should raise your face covering up over your nose and mouth while you are in the same vicinity. Navigate to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtUJPizQVPI&feature=youtu.be> to See New DPH PSA on How to Safely Cover Your Face Outside of Home.

#### **Stay At Home Advisory is STILL in effect**

Wearing a face covering does not make it OK to gather and/or socialize with others. This action is meant to protect others from your respiratory droplets when you must leave your home for necessary errands and activities. Remember people may have the virus and be asymptomatic and contagious all at the same time. Staying home and avoiding close contact with others is still the BEST and most protective option to slow the spread of COVID-19.

#### **Seek help with any medical or health issues**

If you experience any medical issues during this time, please call your doctor. If you have an emergency, please go to the ER. Medical offices and hospitals are abiding by strict protocols to keep patients safe. Please don't let fear of this virus prevent you from seeking needed medical care and potentially exacerbating an issue that may cause you harm. You should call 9-1-1 for any serious medical or mental

## **Available Mental Health and Social Services – Bedford Residents**

During this time, Social Work services remain available to all Bedford residents. The Social Workers are available via phone and can assist with:

Ensuring individuals have food security during this time. Residents who are struggling with having an adequate amount of food in their homes can reach out to the Social Workers for assistance getting connected to the Bedford Food Bank, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP/EBT), and other community resources. The Social Workers will work with residents faced with a hardship and unable to travel outside their homes through food bank home delivery.

Information accessing financial supports such as SNAP, unemployment, MassHealth, and utility assistance. Transportation to appointments and essential services.

General support for coping with anxiety during this time. Residents are able to call and speak with a Social Worker who can provide strategies for managing anxiety.

Outreach calls for residents who are experiencing isolation. Residents who are concerned about individuals who are experiencing isolation can contact the Social Workers.

Getting residents connected with Health and Mental Health providers. At this time counseling services at the Town Center through Eliot Community Human Services have shifted to a tele-health service and referrals continue to be accepted. Intakes are being conducted over the phone or by Zoom. Please note that Bedford residents do not pay a co-pay for therapy through Eliot and lack of insurance is not a barrier to services.

### **Contacts:**

If you are a resident who is 60 or older please contact Social Worker Danika Castle in the Council on Aging at 781-275-6825.

If you are a resident under the age of 60 you can contact Social Worker Christopher Bang in the Youth and Family Services Department at 781-918-4328.

Any Bedford resident seeking mental health counseling or therapy services can contact one of the Social Workers or reach out to Eliot Community Human Services directly at 978-369-1113.

Domestic Violence Services Network, Inc. (DVSN) is continuing to follow up on domestic violence referrals and requests for service on a daily basis and provides community advocacy and safety planning for anyone who calls in or is referred for help and support by law enforcement partners. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DVSN clients need support more than ever and DVSN shall continue to provide CONFIDENTIAL support, advocacy, and resources via telephone to the extent possible. For help and support, PLEASE CALL DVSN's Help Line - 888-399-6111.

Advocates Psychiatric Emergency Service team is always available to offer skilled, compassionate support and connections to resources and services during difficult times. If you are experiencing a mental health or emotional crisis, please call (800) 640-5432 to speak to an Advocates crisis clinician. They are available to help 24 hours a day, every day.